

revista
interamericana
de comunicação
midiática

ANIMUS

Communication, Cultural Identity and the State in Latin America: A Perspective from Europe*

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Abstract

We begin by sketching out the context of recent Latin American research on cultural identity and communication, indicating how this continues to contend with the legacy of theories of dependency and rationalistic assumptions about the role of state intervention in the domain of culture. We then examine recent works by Jesús Martín-Barbero, Néstor García Canclini, and Renato Ortiz. Finally, we examine the European situation in the light of current Latin American debate, and suggest that European developments in media policy may be being misread across the Atlantic.

Key words: Communication - Cultural Identity - Latin America

Resumo

Começamos avaliando o contexto recente da pesquisa em identidade cultural e comunicação na América Latina, indicando a continuidade do legado das teorias da dependência e aportes racionalistas acerca do papel do estado no domínio da cultura. Examinamos os trabalhos recentes de Jesús Martín-Barbero, Néstor García Canclini e Renato Ortiz. Finalmente, examinamos a situação europeia à luz do corrente debate latino-americano e sugerimos que o desenvolvimento europeu em política de comunicação pode estar sendo pouco entendido do outro lado do Atlântico.

Palavras-chave: comunicação - identidade cultural - América Latina

Resumen

Comenzamos evaluando el panorama reciente de la investigación en identidad cultural y comunicación en América Latina, indicando cómo se sigue con el legado de las teorías de dependencia y aportes racionalistas acerca del rol del estado en el dominio de la cultura. Examinamos los trabajos recientes de Jesús Martín-Barbero, Néstor García Canclini e Renato Ortiz. Al final, examinamos la situación europea a luz del corriente debate latinoamericano y sugerimos que el desarrollo europeo en política de comunicación puede estar siendo poco entendido tras el Atlántico.

Palabras clave: comunicación - identidad cultural - América Latina

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* This article was originally published in Ulf Hedetoft (ed.) *Political Symbols, Symbolic Politics: European Identities in Transformation*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998.

Introduction

Questions surrounding the construction of collective identities are at the heart of contemporary cultural theory. In this paper, we set out to analyse how the interrelated themes of identity, culture, and communication have been addressed in the recent work of some of Latin America's most prominent cultural theorists. Consideration of such themes presently criss-crosses the boundaries of the human sciences in ways that make a compelling case for the kind of inter-disciplinary thinking prevalent in Latin America.

We begin by briefly sketching out the context of recent Latin American research on cultural identity and communication, indicating how this continues to contend with the legacy of theories of dependency and rationalistic assumptions about the role of state intervention in the domain of culture. The latter-day impact of postmodern, postnational, and global cultural concerns on Latin American thought is undeniable, and has deeply marked the thinking of the past decade. We then examine recent works by Jesús Martín-Barbero, Néstor García Canclini, and Renato Ortiz, Latin American scholars who are grappling with the theoretical consequences of the decentring of the national state and the wider crisis of political culture that this has engendered. Finally, we briefly examine the European situation in the light of current Latin American debate, and suggest that European developments in media policy may be being misread across the Atlantic.

As in Latin America, a central concern of current European debate is the role of the state in buttressing national cultural production in a global context. On both continents, there is intense discussion about the extent to which recent developments in the globalisation of communication have transformed notions of what constitutes communication sovereignty. Consequently, one line of European Union policy-making that has recently resonated in Latin America has been concerned with the uses and effectiveness of media and cultural policy to secure collective identity.

Latin America

The countries of Latin America - here defined as the twenty former Spanish and Portuguese colonies of the Americas and the Caribbean - have had unsettled histories since their independence from their colonial powers, which in most cases took place in the early 19th century. In the 20th century, autocratic regimes gave way to attempts at limited democracy that were followed by upheavals from the 1960s to the 1980s when most of the region's countries fluctuated between military dictatorships and democratic political systems. Now, with the exception of Cuba, all Latin American countries have elected governments, although some of them, such as Colombia, Mexico, and Peru, are somewhat precarious and threatened from within. Throughout Latin America, relationships between the states and the media have varied from mutual support, to ideological conflict, to outright government control of the media under some authoritarian regimes. Today, the media are for the most part privately owned and free-market oriented (Fox 1996, p. 184).¹ Economically and socially the region is characterised by enormous discrepancies in the distribution of wealth, and by its continuing efforts to modernise infrastructure, improve living standards, and promote economic development.

Like their counterparts elsewhere, Latin American writers are concerned about the roles of the media, the state, and popular culture in society; the relationship of each of these to the others and to the process of identity formation; and the relationship of all of these to forces of globalization and de-territorialisation. These themes have been elaborated in an intellectual field shaped by conditions specific to Latin America: the region's continuing *Third World* status; Latin America's history of political instability and authoritarian rule; and its characteristic social heterogeneity, in particular the mixed Spanish and Indian heritage described by the term *mestizaje*. A recurring theme in much research is the search for tools and frameworks adequate to the task of analysing contemporary society, bearing in

¹ Fox, Elizabeth. 1996. 'Media and Culture in Latin America'. *International Media Research: A Critical Survey*. John Corner, Philip Schlesinger, and Roger Silverstone eds. London: Routledge: 184-205.

² Cardoso, Fernando Henrique and Faletto, Enzo. 1979 [1971]. *Dependency and Development in Latin America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Dorfman, Ariel and Mattelart, Armand. 1972. *Para leer el Pato Donald; comunicación de masa y colonialismo*. Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno.

³ Beltrán S., Luis Ramiro. 1976. 'Alien Premises, Objects, and Methods in Latin American Communication Research'. *Communication Research* 3 (2) : 107-135.

mind the peculiarities of Latin Americanness. The most significant of these frameworks has been the dependency model of political, economic, and historical analysis, which has strongly influenced Latin American intellectual discourse over the past three decades.

The dependency framework, an important and original contribution of Latin American scholarship, emerged from concern about the process and outcomes of the pursuit of modernisation. A product of the 1960s, this model postulated that *underdevelopment* was not caused by the failure of individual states' economies but rather derived from the interlocking global economic system. The developed countries of the centre do not simply benefit by exploiting those on the periphery; industrial capitalism pushes non-industrialised countries into a continuing and subordinate position of dependency (Cardoso and Faletto 1979, p. xxii).²

So far as the field of media and culture was concerned, the dependency approach concluded that communications systems were "conditioned by U.S. communication interests' and that the resulting dominance was ultimately destructive to local cultures and identities (Beltrán 1976, p. 127).³ This now-familiar *cultural imperialism* critique gained prominence in Latin America in the early 1970s. The cultural imperialism argument held that imported media products (usually from the United States) contained ideas that would lead to the decline of traditional lifestyles and values. Such an argument underlies Dorfman and Mattelart's pioneering discussion of Disney comics, *How to Read Donald Duck*:

Why is Disney a threat?... [B]ecause this product of Disneyland... is imported, along with so many other consumer objects, to the dependent country... [B]y importing a product... we are also importing the cultural forms of that society. (1972, p. 155-6)

This contention that imported cultural forms would weaken a country's sense of itself and erode national identity has not been unique to Latin America or the developing world. Over the years, France has been a leader in promulgating this view. The

late President Mitterand affirmed "the right of every country to create its own images", saying that "[a] society which abandons the means of depicting itself would soon be an enslaved society" (cit. in Goodell, 1994, p. 26). This comment, made in connection with controversy over whether to include audiovisual products in the GATT Treaty, indicates that variants of cultural imperialism arguments have continued to be put forward, in Latin America and elsewhere, to the present day. Of late, however, these arguments have been somewhat displaced by the notion of *globalization*, with some recognition that the term globalization "suggests interconnection and interdependency of all global areas which happens in a far less purposeful way" than the intentional control attributed to imperialism (Tomlinson 1991, p. 175).⁴

⁴ Goodell, Jeffrey. 1994. 'The French Revolution'. Premiere May: 26.
Tomlinson, John. 1991. *Cultural Imperialism*. London: Pinter.

Towards a New World Information and Communication Order?

In the 1970s, the cultural imperialism perspective underpinned a growing perception across the Third World of imbalances in international news reporting and worldwide media flows. In Latin America, "the first Third World region as a whole to identify certain problems in its national media systems" (Fox 1988, p. 6), representatives of 20 countries met in 1976 under the auspices of Unesco to discuss issues related to communication policies. They called for a more equilateral international flow of media products, and recommended democratisation of access to mass media, the protection of free speech, and the use of media to support national development (Fox 1988, p. 6-7).⁵ Although these recommendations ultimately had little effect on government policy, they set the stage for further multilateral consultation on the issues.

⁵ Fox, Elizabeth. 1998. 'Media Policies in Latin America: An Overview and Conclusions' in Fox, Elizabeth ed. *Media and Politics in Latin America: The Struggle for Democracy*. London: Sage: 6-35 and 171-188.

The Unesco-sponsored International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, known as the MacBride Commission after its chairman, Sean MacBride of Ireland, convened in 1977. This group spent two years examining questions of the *communication gap* between the developed and developing worlds. Concern that

⁶ International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems. 1980. *Many Voices, One World*. Paris: Unesco.

most countries in the developing world were merely *passive receivers* of news and entertainment from the developed world inspired calls for the creation of a "new more just and more efficient world information and communication order", commonly abbreviated as the New World Information and Communication Order, or NWICO (International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems 1980, p.39).⁶

Communication flows have changed since the MacBride Commission report. Within Latin America, Brazil and Mexico have established strong audiovisual sectors. Both countries have become successful exporters of media products - notably the particularly Latin American version of soap operas known as *telenovelas* - to other countries in Latin America and elsewhere, and, in the case of Mexico, to the Spanish-speaking market in the United States. Nonetheless, even in Latin American countries with active media industries, huge import-export balances persist. Mexico still imports far more of its programming than does the United States - some 30 percent for Mexico, to two percent for the U.S. Enrique E. Sánchez Ruiz has suggested that there is therefore no serious break with Mexico's established pattern of *associated-dependent* development under the sway of the United States: "the pattern of interdependence was, and still is, asymmetrical, so it is finally a pattern of domination, even if there is not necessarily a *will* to dominate" (Sánchez Ruiz 1994, p. 73).⁷

National Communication Policies - and after

One aspect of the resistance of Latin American politicians and intellectuals to dependency and cultural imperialism was the advocacy of national communication policies designed to counter U.S. cultural dominance. National communication policy arguments, which were particularly prominent in the 1970s, have been based on two key assumptions: first, that rational policy-making in the cultural domain is possible; and second, that domestic or regional cultural production will have an integrating

⁷ Sánchez Ruiz, Enrique E. 1994. 'The Mexican Audiovisual Space and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)', *Media Information Australia* 71: 70-77.

effect on the societies that consume it.

Although exponents of this perspective may still be found, these arguments have become less fashionable - and less persuasive - as the role of the national state and its capacity to exercise power in the context of a global economy, transnational trading blocs, and political alliance structures has been reappraised. Analyses of communication policy in Latin America, as in Europe, have been increasingly influenced by the transformative context of transnationalisation or globalisation. Nevertheless, the national communication policy line of argument persists, providing a yardstick against which recent shifts in thinking might be measured.

Adherents of an interventionist approach must, it seems, attempt to negotiate with new realities and see what then remains of a rationalistic approach to policy analysis. A number of writers' recent work shows clearly - albeit with different emphases- the scope and limitations of the thinking involved. The 1993 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the United States, Canada, and Mexico has sensitised Mexican researchers to the possible cultural impact of a free trading zone. A rather apocalyptic construction has been put on this by Javier Esteinou Madrid who is concerned with how the *world integration phase* of the global economy will impact on Mexico's position in a global market. For him the state offers a weak instrument for control over national culture and identity (1993, p. 78).⁸ The new model of consumption, he argues, requires electronic media to create new subjective conditions: in effect, television is conceived of as a machine for the production of market-oriented individualism. From the nationalistic and statist point of view, says Esteinou Madrid, Mexico faces a "collective spiritual conquest", with "the new goods coming from the outside hav[ing] the same effect as the sequins and glass beads" brought by the Spanish conquerors five centuries ago "in order to trade trinkets for our precious metals" (1993, p. 80).

Mexico, says Esteinou Madrid, is experienc-

⁸ Esteinou Madrid, Javier. 1993. 'National Sovereignty, Communication and World Integration: the Case of Mexico.' *Mexican Journal of Communication* 1(1) : 77-86.

ing a second “commercial evangelisation of our identity” via NAFTA and GATT. The state has therefore to intervene using a *rational policy* for television; a *nationalist communications policy* is needed to counter the medium’s fragmenting impact. The conception of television is an instrumental one. It is seen as a collective educator that needs to raise “people’s consciousness regarding the problems we face as a society” - this in turn is to lead to a “comprehensive culture for national survival”, as against elitist conceptions of culture (1993, p.82). Communication, then, is seen as part of a new political culture, essential to national survival, analogous to controlling the country’s natural resources and strategic industries:

Now, with the process of opening the country’s cultural borders through new information technologies, in order for the state to maintain its ideological sovereignty, it must raise cultural activity, national identity, and its instruments of collective dissemination, such as the mass media, to the level of strategic fields. (Esteinou Madrid 1993, p. 85)

The Peruvian researcher Rafael Roncagliolo addresses the changing global communications scene in much the same terms, although with a slightly more flexible response. From his perspective, the polity, economy, and culture all need to be rethought; the national state, the classic power-container for these different domains, has come under profound challenge.

In the political sphere, the transnationalisation process is characterised by the ability of transnational entities to reduce the autonomy of the central and peripheral states as well. In the economic sphere, this stage is characterised by global rather than national organisation of productive activities. In the cultural sphere, this same process leads to what McLuhan calls the *global village* - a global community of receptors born out of the centralised expansion of the world market of information goods and services. (Roncagliolo 1994, p. 272)⁹

It is transnationalisation, therefore, that re-contextualises national communication policies and defines the new agenda for Roncagliolo in which re-

⁹ Roncagliolo, Rafael. 1994. ‘Communication and Development: The Contribution of Research’, in Cees J. Hamelink and Olga Linné, eds. *Mass Communication Research: On Problems and Policies*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex: 267-275.

search and analysis need to be “in dialogue with the states” (1994, p. 270-271). Looking back over the history of Latin American research, he concludes that the previous attempts to formulate national communication policies and efforts to work against *information colonialism* have been unsuccessful, and suggests that despite past failures the need for state intervention has not gone away. “The problem of national communication policies today is more pressing than ever in Latin America...simply because the development of new technologies has created a new situation and challenge that states (and the private sector) cannot ignore” (1994, p. 270). A new realism is now required: for instance, it is wrong to assume that new technologies are simply oppressive, rather they do have a progressive potential.

The argument focuses upon how media production may relate to cultural integration and act as a counter-weight to imports: alongside audiovisual production to maintain cultural identity at the national level there should also be regional exchanges in Latin America “that would lower intra-regional production costs in favour of an authentic and pluralist Latin American integration” (1994, p. 274). This is a regionalist as well as a nationalist project—assuming, of course, that there is no contradiction between interests operating at these two levels.

As in Europe and elsewhere, those arguing for some continuing role for national state intervention in the fields of media and cultural policy have had to make their case against an ascendant neo-liberalism. This revisionist *exit from dependency* argument has been presented quite explicitly, for instance, in the work of the Brazilian communication researcher José Marques de Melo, who has drawn attention to the role of countries such as Brazil and Mexico as major exporters of *telenovelas* and music. For Marques de Melo one of the consequences of the military dictatorship in Brazil, and the special rights it afforded Brazil's Globo television company in exchange for cooperativeness during dictatorial rule, was that it permitted TV to produce a sense of *Brazilianness* (1995, p.320).⁹ The growth attained

¹⁰ Marques de Melo, J. 1995. 'Development of the audiovisual industry in Brazil from importer to exporter of television programming', *Canadian Journal of Communication* 20 (3) : 317-328.

Sinclair, John. 1986. *D e p e n d e n t 'Development and Broadcasting: The Mexican Formula'". Media, Culture and Society*, 8(1) : 81-101.
Mattelart, Michèle and Mattelart, Armand. 1987. *Le Carnaval des Images: La Fiction Brésilienne*. Paris: La Documentation Française.

¹¹ Marques de Melo, José. 1992. 'MacBride and Latin America: From Cold War to the Good-Willing Spirit' in J. Marques de Melo ed., *Brazilian Communication Research Yearbook*. São Paulo: School of Communications and Arts, University of São Paulo : 109-121.

¹² Mitchell, David and Einsiedel, Edna. 1995. 'Introduction: Communication in the Americas', *Canadian Journal of Communication* 20(3) : 291-298.

¹³ Roncagliolo, Rafael. 1995. 'Trade Integration and Communication Networks in Latin America'. *Canadian Journal of Communication* 20(3) : 335-342.

under these conditions has allowed Brazilian exporters to develop external markets, although it is recognised that exports have in fact contributed a relatively small part of Globo's profits.

Underlying this market-driven argument is an undoubted nationalism. Marques de Melo writes with evident pride of the emulation of Brazilian production, of the international Latin American market for writers and script adaptation. The market, rather than state intervention, is seen as bringing about Sean MacBride's vision of a more equitable global cultural and information order. However, it is arguably a certain form of statism, involving both in Brazil and Mexico a rigging of the market, that has permitted the growth of the media giants, encouraging the dominance of Globo and Televisa (Sinclair 1986; Mattelart and Mattelart 1987).¹⁰

In another article, Marques de Melo quite consciously realigns the terms of the MacBride report, arguing that the end of the Cold War requires a re-evaluation of the goals of NWICO in a changed, democratic context. In his view, NWICO was not seriously implemented in Latin America because of the statist obsession with public service broadcasting and with East European models. There was a concomitant failure to recognise the growing strengths of national production, a fixation with the popular and a gap between the analyses provided by university intellectuals and the needs of industry. From this perspective, the entry of such enterprises as Televisa and Globo into the international market, and their relative success, is seen as actualising the goals of the MacBride report (Marques de Melo 1992, p. 118).¹¹ As Mitchell and Einsiedel have commented, "It is ironic to see indigenous private sector firms counted alongside public and community networks in the motion towards the MacBride vision of more equitable international media flows" (1995, p. 297).¹²

It is precisely this positive embrace of the opening-up of the market that is doughtily countered by Roncagliolo (1995).¹³ For him it represents *integration* into the global economy, but without defences. He also seeks to relativise the

nationalist argument by pointing out that the dominant exporting countries in Latin America - Brazil and Mexico - are exceptions. He notes that there are now new exporters, in particular Argentina and Venezuela, but that most Latin American countries continue to be net importers of cultural goods. In sum, he says, "all Latin American countries are dependent, but some are more dependent than others" (1995, p. 338). For him, a distinctive Latin American form of integration has yet to succeed, the televisual mix is one dominated by private enterprise with public and state broadcasting at the margins, and there remains a serious lack of national production. Any emergent public sphere, he believes, will have to come from below, at the level of community and local production (1995, p. 341-342).

A similar refusal to accept the sidelining of overarching structures of cultural and mediatic power is to be found in the work of Armand Mattelart (1994),¹⁴ who argues that one of the conceptual implications of thinking in terms of *globalisation* is to flatten out difference. For him, the assumption of liberty of expression (embodied at least in some of forms of *hybridity* - conceived as self-expressive, new combinations of cultural elements) is merely the liberty of commercial expression. The free market is linked to populism, he contends, which is the theoretical basis for an *active audience* theory that in its extreme versions tends to equate empowerment with consumption itself; such approaches, he believes, have a tendency to sidestep questions of cultural subordination.¹⁵

Roncagliolo's and Mattelart's positions are in many respects similar to that of Beatriz Sarlo. Hers could be termed a *authentic populist* position where the exercise of freedom of choice precisely occurs at the base:

[I]f hybridisation is in effect a mode of cultural construction, it is important that the materials that go into the pot may be selected in the freest, most egalitarian way possible, both institutionally and economically. (Sarlo 1994, p. 132)¹⁶

This perspective recognises that *hybridisation*

¹⁴ Mattelart, Armand. 1994. *Les nouveaux scénarios de la communication internationale*. Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya.

¹⁵ "es importante que, si la hibridación es efectivamente un modo de construcción cultural, los materiales que entren en su caldera puedan ser elegidos de la manera más libre que sea posible, más igualitaria desde el punto de vista institucional y económico". We are grateful to Mario Kaplún for bringing this work to our attention.

¹⁶ Sarlo, Beatriz. 1994. 'Culturas populares, viejas y nuevas'. *Escenas de la vida posmoderna*. Buenos Aires: Ariel : 107-132.

in some sense exists. However, it also insists that we appreciate the power dimension of cultural formations, the determinations that structure and are embodied in cultural forms. In other words, hybridity is relocated in the realm of necessity rather than that of freedom.

This argument is clearly articulated in the work of the Mexican cultural sociologist Jorge González, who departs from a critique of the supposed rationalism of cultural policy-making, which he sees both as based in trial and error and as post-hoc ratification of pressures for attention by competing interests. His research is animated by a double desire. First, he wishes to test and demonstrate the validity of a reflexive cultural sociology, much inspired by the work of Pierre Bourdieu, in which the objectivisation of dimensions of culture is coupled with the recognition of the subjectivity of action and meaning. Second, as a conscious rejection of client-oriented social research, he aims to add to a systematic knowledge of the available cultural range (*oferta cultural*) in Mexico and to investigate how this is diversely accessed and used across the range of social groups. Most recently, he has expressly linked his project to the public interest goal of underpinning national autonomy:

¹⁷ "Colaborar al reforzamiento de una cultura de la información, como recurso estratégico para el crecimiento y un desarrollo más independiente y autónomo de México, es sin duda el telón de esta empresa".

Collaboration in the strengthening of a culture of information, as a strategic resource for growth and for a more independent and autonomous development of Mexico, is without question the backdrop of this undertaking. (González 1995, p. 157)¹⁷

Reliable knowledge in developing a "cartography of cultural resources" is seen as providing a basis for credible political intervention. This project is carried out within a resolutely national frame of reference rather than a *Latin American* one. In that respect, his work moves in quite the opposite direction from other theorists considered here, who have treated the *national* as a questionable framework of analysis.

Like them, however, González conceives culture as an object of struggle, subject to power re-

¹⁸ González, Jorge A. 1994. 'La transformación de las ofertas culturales y sus públicos en México'. *Estudios sobre las culturas contemporáneas*, 6(18): 9-25.

lations. He argues that the cultural practices at the heart of consumption, especially those generated in the familial habitus, but also those distributed by a range of cultural institutions, are "always situational and work through a link to memory" (1994, p.15).¹⁸ The family and its governance by genealogy and memory becomes the focal point for an encounter with the most fundamental cultural goods - namely those supplied by the institutions of religion, education, welfare, art and the media. Places for the public consumption of food, the purchase of provisions, and of entertainment are also examined in this work.

This builds upon González's earlier studies (1987; 1993), in which the metaphor of cultural *navigation* looms large. There, he was concerned with how different cultural sites and forms - such as sanctuaries, regional fairs, and *telenovelas* - were diversely consumed and contested by different social groups. González's concern with the stratifications and interactions of consumption has taken him away from the *hybridity* model and toward a structurally differentiated sociology of collective tastes and uses far from the siren calls of postmodernism. His recent formulation of a longitudinal *cultural cartography* is firmly rooted in historically derived relations of power (1995, p. 142). This is undeniably a turn towards structure and systematicity.¹⁹

Media and Popular Culture

Many Latin American analysts continue to warn of the dangers of media domination and cultural homogenisation, but they have been joined by other scholars who highlight how popular culture circumvents the perceived power of international media industries and gives voice to popular demands and interests. While this major revisionist current of Latin American cultural analysis acknowledges that Latin American countries import most of their films and much of their television programming from the U.S., and that *global culture* is deeply imbricated in everyday life, the arguments have been turned around in quite far-reaching ways.

In many societies, the numerous alternative

¹⁹ González, Jorge A. 1987. 'Los frentes culturales: Culturas, mapas, poderes y luchas por las definiciones legítimas de los sentidos sociales de la vida'. *Estudios sobre las culturas contemporáneas* 1(3) : 5-44.

——— 1993. 'Metodología y sociología reflexivas: Navega procesos mares del placer'. *Estudios sobre las culturas contemporáneas* 5(15) : 209-226.

——— 1995. 'Coordenadas del imaginario: Protocolo para el uso de las cartografías culturales'. *Estudios sobre las culturas contemporáneas*, *Época II* 1(2) : 135-161.

channels of expression controlled neither by multinationals nor by the state include such activities as neighbourhood gatherings, loudspeakers mounted on vehicles, and photocopied leaflets and news-letters. Such communication channels have been particularly important in recent Latin American history, providing outlets for popular creativity, not to mention resistance, during the era of repressive dictatorships. The burgeoning of alternative media was a significant offshoot of military regimes censorship of mainstream media (Fox 1988,p.182). The significance of such small-scale media has led Latin American analysts to reassess the relationship between media and identity.

Two crucial moves have shaped analysis of media, the state and popular culture. First, there has been a broad reevaluation of the role of popular culture in identity formation - one that carries profound implications for thinking through the relations between the people and the national state in Latin America. Second, the very role of the national state as an instance of political and cultural sovereignty has come under comprehensive challenge, which has unleashed questions concerning the locus and exercise of cultural power. As is evident from the discussion above, there has been a consistent worry that Latin American identity is being swamped by commercial U.S. media and other products (cf. Morris 1995, ch. 6, for the Puerto Rican case).²⁰ Typically, in this style of argument, it is assumed that we know what a national identity is - it is not treated as problematic - and typically too, it is also held to be the object of negative effects.

Characteristic of the underlying engagement of the cultural analysts under discussion is an attempt to clarify questions of identity with a much greater degree of sophistication than the simplistic model regnant in some dependency thinking. This conceptual development of theories of identity is undertaken as part of a radical reappraisal of the lingering arguments about cultural dependency in Latin America in the context of U.S. global hegemony. *Identity* is not simply an object that is acted upon

²⁰ Morris, Nancy. 1995. Puerto Rico: Culture, Politics, and Identity. Westport, CT: Praeger.

by external forces but rather has been rethought as a complex field of action.

The developing argument about the hybridity of Latin American identities is - so some would argue - part of the shift towards postmodernist theory in Latin America. For instance, in their introduction to a recent anthology, Beverley and Oviedo have analysed the emergence of a *regional* variant of postmodernism - much as have many in Europe - as an outcome of crises of the projects of nationalism and leftist reformism. The classic Marxist preoccupation with the dominant role of ideology and the sustaining structures of cultural imperialism is seen as *passé*, yielding to the implication that we should accept "the challenge of mass culture and the mass media rather than simply discussing these as sites for the production of false consciousness" (Beverley and Oviedo 1993, p.12).²¹ This is of a piece with the proclaimed super-session of dependency thinking in many quarters.

²¹ Beverley, John and Oviedo, José eds. 1993. The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America, *Boundary 2, Special Issue* 20(3).

From hegemony to mediation - Jesús Martín-Barbero

Jesús Martín-Barbero's book *De los medios a las mediaciones* has been taken as a benchmark of an important shift of focus in Latin American cultural research. Its underlying political message is that there are neglected modes of participation in everyday life, and these forms of action offer points of entry into the dominant culture and power structure, by subverting it if necessary, and by appropriating it to other uses.²²

²² Martín-Barbero, Jesús. 1993a. Communication, Culture and Hegemony: From the Media to Mediations. London: Sage.

_____ 1993b 'Latin America: Cultures in the Communication Media'. *Journal of Communication* 43(2) : 18-30.

_____ 1993/4 'La comunicación, centro de la modernidad: Una peculiar relación en América Latina'. *Telos: Cuadernos de comunicación, tecnología, y sociedad* 36, Dec. 1993-Feb. 1994 : 39-46.

_____ 1997. 'Cultural Decentring and Palimpsests of Identity', *Media Development* 54(1) : 18-21.

Martín-Barbero signalled a break with concerns about the homogenisation of culture due to its transnationalisation. He also queried the very categories of the nation and the state, asking whether a focus on public policy-making was the best way into an understanding of the working of popular culture. Martín-Barbero offers a broad conception of communication, going well beyond a concern with the media themselves to the proposal that *mediation* become a central category for analysis. This entails looking at how culture is negotiated and is an object of transactions in a variety of contexts, ranging a-

cross the cinema, the popular press, radio, television, the circus, musical performance, and much else besides. He suggests that for Latin America the syncretic nature of popular practices is quite central. These practices contribute both to the preservation of cultural identities and to their adaptation to present-day demands. At heart, therefore, the concern with *mediations* is a discourse on the making of identities.

Martín-Barbero's subsequent writing has begun from the positions developed in his book. Much of it remains suggestive and hypothetical, a provocation to research and further analysis, rather than firmly conclusive. It populates the conceptual terrain with a distinctive terminology: dominant ideology is abandoned, transnational identities and cultural citizenship enter the scene. Questions are posed (if not resolved) concerning specific media and their distinctive roles in identity constitution, the role of the national state, and what is left for notions of an overarching political community and cultural sovereignty. One implication of this analysis for the processes of formation of cultural identity is that "the culture industry, by producing new hybrids resulting from the erasing of boundaries between high culture and popular culture, traditional and modern, and domestic and foreign is reorganising collective identities and forms of symbolic differentiation" (1993a, p. 26).

Latterly, in a series of articles, Martín-Barbero (e.g. 1993b, 1993/4) has further tilled by now familiar ground: he has argued that we need to think about cultural identity in Latin America in relation to popular culture, and that popular culture has profoundly modified the forms of expression of mass culture. In an illuminating formulation, he suggests that "[u]nderstanding the process of mass communication implies recognising the rearticulations of symbolic boundaries and how these new boundaries confirm the value and power of collective identities" (1993b, p. 26). Of course, this perspective merely opens up the question of how collectivities relate to media rather than telling us how the changes are

actually accomplished.

Martín-Barbero identifies mass communication as a crucial locus of contending discourses which for the left “embodies the spearhead of imperialism and the loss of national identity” and for the right “is the strongest example of cultural decadence and moral degradation” (1993b, p. 25). He also argues against a mediacentric viewpoint, suggesting that processes of communication be addressed from the standpoint of social movements rather than beginning with assumptions about media power. The proposal is that we attend to the mediations - not the media or the text - namely, that we analyse how the popular classes interpret symbolic products. In short, meanings are not simply decoded according to the intentions of the dominant culture.²³

²³ There is a manifest link to the *ethnographic turn* in media and cultural studies so fashionable in Europe and North America, exemplified in the work of Ang, Fiske, Morley and many others.

In the field of popular culture, music is perceived as a key form of expression, one that has migrated and recombined. Martín-Barbero also notes the important role of radio in sustaining an everyday sense of collective identity for the popular classes in urban society (1993b, p. 22).²⁴ Television is a medium that is intimately linked, particularly through the *telenovela*, to “lives, fears and hopes of the people” (1993b, p. 22).

²⁴ This focus connects with recent European work, such as that concerning broadcast talk conducted by Scannell (1991) and others. It also links to the *banal nationalism* thesis of Billig (1995) who essentially argues for the everydayness of reminders of national identity. Scannell, Paddy ed. 1991. *Broadcast Talk*. London: Sage. Billig, Michael. 1995. *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage.

One new theme - and as will be seen, this finds its echoes elsewhere in contemporary Latin American cultural theory - concerns what are termed *detrterritorialised memories*: that is, the production of cultures and subcultures tied to the transnational commercial media markets. Here, a distinction is made between “written cultures that are linked directly to languages and therefore to a territory” and “the cultures of images and music of television and video” that

produce new cultural communities difficult to compare or understand in relation to a given territory. These are not only new cultures but, essentially, youth cultures, and are frequently accused of being antinational because they have no roots in a given territory. However, they are not so much antinational as they are a new way of perceiving identity. They are identities with

²⁵ Cf. Anthony Smith's (1995) much more uncompromising dismissal of *global culture* and Ulf Hannerz's (1993) argument that we should take it seriously as a new space. Smith, Anthony. 1995. *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*. Cambridge: Polity Press. Hannerz, Ulf. 1993. 'The Withering Away of the Nation? An Afterword'. *Ethnos*, 3-4: 377-391.

²⁶ García Canclini (1995b), by contrast, does think some lessons can be learned from EU cultural policy. Latterly, Martín-Barbero (1996) has noted Europe's relevance (even if in passing).

shorter, more precarious time spans and a flexibility allowing them to bring together ingredients from different cultural worlds. (1993b, p. 27)²⁵

This raises some crucial questions about the sustainability and meaning of such transnational communities sustained by youth culture - as opposed to, say, transnational ethnic communities. Nevertheless, the break with the problematic of an externally imposed cultural hegemony is plain. Transnationalisation is seen as dislocating rather than as homogenising cultures, and in this context it is hard to see how an overarching collective identity can be imposed at the national level by means of public policy measures undertaken by the state.

Indeed, in a later piece, Martín-Barbero (1993/4) has radically questioned the capacity of state action to achieve any significant measure of control over communication. He has argued that new media technologies are central in bringing about a new social model and that modernisation in Latin America needs to be understood on its own terms rather than be seen through the lens of other experiences elsewhere, such as those of Europe.²⁶

In this version of modernity, with new forms of sociability and new sensibility, the media, and television especially, offer "a certain global view of city and society, making them comprehensible and to a certain extent reasonable to a fragmented public" (1993/4, p. 43, original emphasis). However, contemporary media culture is ahistoricised and discontinuous - an aspect with potentially profound implications for a society's sense of itself.

Martín-Barbero also calls for a rethinking of old models of political culture, where "communication needs to be thought of as a decisive space in the redefinition of the public and the construction of democracy" (1993/4, p. 44). In a previous modernising phase between 1930-50, he observes, the media "were decisive for the formation and diffusion of national identity and feeling" (1993/4, p.44). The national economies at that time entered the international market and the political project of forming a *national sentiment* was taken up especially by radio,

which acted as mediator between the state and the urban masses, who were transformed into a people and then into a nation.

However, this process has now gone into reverse: the media devalue the national, memories have become deterritorialised, images have become denationalised, the youth are appealed to through music and video. In this perspective, the dichotomy between the national and the *antinational* has been superseded by fragmentation and the segmentation of markets, a process occurring at both the local and the global levels. The consequence, it is argued, is that from a global point of view, the national is seen as provincial and weighed down by statism, whereas from a local point of view the nation is perceived as centralising. These combined pressures mean that there are no ways of defining the boundaries of a common national culture, policed by the sovereignty of the state.

Compared to the statist solutions proposed by other analysts - such as those in the national communication policy tradition - this is a radical deconstruction of the potential of states to control processes of cultural management in the interests of national identity maintenance. Consequently, we should not be surprised by postnational comments such as this: "It is the very category of the border that has lost its references and along with this the idea of the nation that inspired a whole cultural configuration" (1993/4, p. 45).²⁷

At the same time, however, Martín-Barbero still wishes to argue that the national constitutes a strategic space of resistance to global domination, that it permits the historical memory of peoples to be kept alive and that it offers a space for inter-generational dialogue. There are also transnational cultural elements that cross state boundaries in Latin America, which has long been culturally unified by radio and music, Martín-Barbero maintains. In the new situation, however, the region is being unified in the context of a market-driven global economy, an integration process in which communication and information technologies play a key role. Audiovisual

²⁷ "Es la categoría misma de frontera la que ha perdido sus referencias y con ella la idea de nación que inspiró toda una configuración de lo cultural".

media are central for Latin Americans in providing images of themselves, so media enterprises such as Brazil's Globo and Mexico's Televisa are vitally important, with advertising and drama singled out as key forms for Latin American audiences.

One important implication of the argument sketched out above is that the defence of Latin American culture has shifted from the national state to national (but also at the same time transnational) private enterprise: the insertion of companies such as Globo and Televisa into the global market provides a guarantee of cultural vitality because they have secured a crucial sector of production and distribution. However, this market position is secured, in effect, by the dilution of cultural specificity and a shift in the notion of quality from meaningful content to glossy production values. But if these private enterprises are now the new champions of Latin Americanness, how does this relate to questions of public policy? The *Latin American imaginary* is being reshaped outside of assertions of the public interest. The impact of postmodern thinking on this argument is plain, and it carries weighty postnational implications.

In his most recent work, Martín-Barbero (1997) further considers the matter of what he now terms *cultural decentring* and the complexity of contemporary identity that this produces. He opens with a provocative question, asking "From where should we think about identity?", for one's centrality or peripherality, he suggests, has an impact on the issues raised and on our perceptions of whether we have merely to live with diversity or think more fundamentally in terms of cultural survival.

In a brief comparison, Martín-Barbero (1997, p. 18) depicts multilingual EU Europe as recognising regional diversity and stateless nations and supporting them through audiovisual production. In a reprise of earlier views, he opines that Latin America, despite its common culture, has gone in another direction: the *telenovela* - its distinctive form of authentic cultural expression - has become cheapened and commercialised and trades in stereotypes.

While the frontiers have become mobile, he cautions against an optimistic reading of a drive towards a global community. But neither, he suggests, should we indulge in a catastrophist interpretation. What Martín-Barbero proposes instead is that we understand contemporary identities as *palimpsests*: layered formations in which the muddy past may be discerned through the veils of the present. This metaphor is used to encompass the tensions between the recognition of cultural decentring in some domains and the continuing relevance of state-based territoriality. Increasingly, this bending of the knee to the impact of postmodernity has been coupled in Latin American cultural theory with a more emphatic recognition of the continuing weight of older collectivities and the state system.

For Martín-Barbero, there are two strategic locations for thinking about identity today: the nation and the city. The nation has overflowed its boundaries, with culture in Latin America losing its organic link with language and territory. The crisis of the national also presents itself as a crisis of political legitimacy and of social scientific knowledge. These configure into an overall crisis of representation, in which the very language for meaningfully representing collectivities is placed profoundly in question. Thus, what is now called *the public* is in some senses both extended and yet weakened. There is a new public space in which politics, intellectuals and communication have realigned, but this does not equate to greater democratic participation within national societies.

The city, he says, is disintegrating, subject to increasing attempts at rationalisation, a process that accompanies growing deterritorialisation and a loss of feelings of belonging by its inhabitants. The *information society* privileges the circulation of data, so it is argued, rather than the personal encounter, rendering the mediated city a *virtual* entity. Following Benjamin, Martín-Barbero suggests that the audio-visual media have constituted a new sensorium of privatised experience. There has been a shift from publics to audiences. Nevertheless, within this dys-

topian perspective there is an emancipatory glimmering, as there are new forms of association in electronic culture, especially among the young. The consumption of popular culture, ludic relations to new information technologies, solidarities generated by music are elements of a contrary movement, portents of a new human plasticity.

Cultural hybridity - Néstor García Canclini

In ways broadly akin to Martín-Barbero, Néstor García Canclini has argued that mass media have not wiped out traditional forms of cultural expression but rather that they have contributed to a reshaping that has transformed and displaced the formerly established modes of thinking about culture: "High, popular, and mass are no longer to be found in their familiar places. The traditional and the modern are mixed together all the time" (1992, p. 30-31).²⁸

In his approach to the question of *hybrid cultures*, García Canclini has shared with Martín-Barbero the need for theoretical reformulation entailed by rejection of the dual problematic of cultural imperialism and national communication policy. Latterly, in a shift of emphasis, García Canclini has begun to think through relations between changing cultural formations and public policy.

In his synthetic work *Culturas Híbridas* García Canclini addresses the impact of what he terms the *hybridisation* of the world of culture on established conceptions of modernity and of Latin American modernisation. He uses this term both because it permits him to designate "diverse intercultural mixtures - not only the racial ones to which mestizaje tends to be limited" and "because it permits the inclusion of the modern forms of hybridisation better than does *syncretism*, a term that almost always refers to religious fusions or traditional symbolic movements" (1995a, p. 11, note 1). García Canclini's book is also an argument for rethinking disciplinary approaches in a context that demands interdisciplinarity (1995a, p. 4). It is, moreover, an enga-

²⁸ García Canclini, Néstor. 1992. 'Cultural Re-conversion'. In *On Edge: The Crisis of Contemporary Latin American Culture*. George Yudice, Jean Franco, and Juan Flores eds. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 29-43.

_____. 1995a. [1989] *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

_____. 1995b. *Consumidores y ciudadanos: Conflictos multiculturales de globalización*. Mexico: Grijalbo.

gement with the impact of postmodernity - described as "not a stage or tendency that replaces the modern world" but rather as a way of signalling current uncertainties both theoretical and socio-cultural (1995a, p. 9).

The overall context of this work is that of Latin America's unfinished political and economic modernisation process, in which incompletely national, state-policed cultures have collided with the post-1980s transformation of *symbolic markets*, that is, markets of artefacts that are sold as cultural goods, of which media products are a prime example. The existing, novel, hybrid mix of cultured, popular and massified has been produced by urban expansion. From this somewhat different starting point, then, García Canclini arrives at a conclusion shared by Martín-Barbero: traditional forms of political life and urban culture have declined and media have "become the dominant constituents of the *public* meaning of the city, those that stimulate a disintegrated imaginary public sphere" (1995a, p. 210).

García Canclini suggests that two processes characterise the contemporary period. First, the *de-collection* of symbolic goods - those products such as fashion items, fast food or pop music that carry condensed cultural meanings. Individuals are re-ordering their cultural products according to personal taste rather than to established, socially consecrated canons of consumption. In this displacement of once-established rules, new technologies of reproduction - photocopiers, VCRs, videos and video games - play a key role in providing the means for individuals to reassemble their new cultural collections. This shift has a profound impact on artistic production which now tends to lack *referents of legitimacy* (1995a, p. 243).

Alongside this is a process of *deteritorialisation* involving "the losses of the *natural* relation of culture to geographical and social territories and, at the same time, certain partial territorial relocalisations of old and new symbolic productions" (1995a, p. 228-229). Examples given are the rise of Brazil as a cultural exporter and the large-scale Latin

American labour migration to the U.S.

However, contrary to most postmodernist thinking, García Canclini contends that fundamental questions about “identity and the national, the defense of sovereignty, and the unequal appropriation of knowledge and art do not disappear. The conflicts are not erased...They are placed in a different register, one that is multilocal and more tolerant, and the autonomy of each culture is rethought” (1995a, p. 240-241). The point is put with greatest clarity when García Canclini says: “It is a question of analyzing what the political consequences are of moving from a vertical and bipolar conception of sociopolitical relations to one that is decentred and multidetermined” (1995a, p.258, original emphasis).

The exercise of power in this reconfigured framework does not disappear but instead becomes *oblique* and the model of well-defined cultures has been displaced: “today all cultures are border cultures” (1995a, p. 261). What this therefore entails is the need for a pluralist analytical perspective on Latin American modernity where the incomplete modernisation of state and society coexists with postmodernity: popular and elite cultures, with their traditional roots, belong to the modern, whereas mass culture is postmodern, a “disorganising-organising matrix of temporal experiences” (1995a, p. 274). This more heterogeneous cultural reality should not be thought to be democratic, nor to escape the operations of “old and new devices for concentrating hegemony” (1995a, p. 280). These latter observations, which are not developed into an elaborated critique, do nonetheless underline the determined refusal to celebrate any postmodern vision: instead, it becomes part of the contemporary dilemma.

In a related analysis, it is suggested that the established relations between social class, cultural stratification and the consumption of symbolic goods have broken down. Or, in another formulation, that there are now distinctive temporalities: industrial culture is of the here-and-now and perhaps integrates shifting populations into *postmodernity*;

however, the continuing persistence of elite and popular cultures of the more traditional kind also offers the basis for historically-rooted collective memories.

In terms of how cultural and national identities are conceived, García Canclini raises questions about the relations between identity and territory, pointing to three major consequences. First, the re-organisation of culture and the crossing-points of identity mean that the rules governing social relations have changed and need to be interrogated differently. Second, there is no longer a simple coalescence of the national and the popular. This is because there is no hegemonic national space, the *nation* (i.e., the state, we imagine) having dissolved into "a dense network of economic and ideological structures" (1989, p. 19). Third, García Canclini raises questions about the relations between identity and territory. The elaboration of collective identity still occurs predominantly within territorial frames, but there is a significant loosening of the relations between cultural products and their place of origin. For instance, the migration of millions of Latinos to the USA and the shift of Latin American culture to North America do not fit the unidirectional model of cultural imperialism. The new circuits of culture and the changed relations they bring with them raise far-reaching questions about identity, nationality, the defence of sovereignty, and the appropriation of culture.

García Canclini's later (1995b) analysis shifts onto the terrain of *cultural citizenship*, which - as in comparable writing in Australia, Canada and Europe - now seems to be one of the new buzz words (cf. e.g., Murdock 1992; Turner 1994).²⁹ Where the argument about *hybrid cultures* inclined towards the dislocating impact of new patterns of consumption (as the outcomes of changed social relations), there is now an attempt to address how the discerned *cultural hybridity* can be harnessed to a political project. We could analyse this as the necessary step to replace the obsolescent project of a national communication policy, which has been outflanked by the new international relations of communication.

²⁹ Murdock, Graham. 1992. 'Citizens, Consumers and Public Culture' in Skovmand, Michael and Schröder, Kim Christian eds. *Media Cultures: Reappraising Transnational Media*: 17-41.

Turner, Brian. 1994. 'Postmodern Culture/Modern Citizens' in Bart van Steenberg, ed. *The Condition of Citizenship*. London: Sage: 153-168.

For García Canclini, *globalisation* has altogether shifted the relations between economy and culture. Citizenship is invoked as a possible counterweight to the impact of neo-liberal market relations. However, this is not the Habermasian conception in which a separation is made between the irrational consumer and the rational political actor; rather it is an argument for looking at consumption and citizenship jointly and therefore transforming how we think of each. *Cultural citizenship* in this conception makes a shift from the formal notion of membership of a state to the informally circumscribed practices of belonging that relate to given groups (1995b, p. 19).

While García Canclini draws upon the debates over multiculturalism in the United States, his aim is to go beyond the struggle to have differences recognised. Central to the argument is the link between cultural diversity, cultural policy and the reform of the state in a context where identities are shifting from the modern to the postmodern: "Modern identities were territorial and almost always monolingual" whereas "postmodern identities are transterritorial and multilingual ... The classic socio-spatial definition of identity, referring to a specific territory, has to be complemented with a socio-communicative definition" (1995b, p. 30-31; original emphases).³⁰

Postmodern, communication-based, popular culture is seen as a resource for entry into the public sphere and as the object of identity and cultural politics much more than is the historic heritage. García Canclini's analytic strategy is not to argue that all has changed but rather to point to how different *sociocultural circuits* relate variously to processes of transnationalisation. In this connection, he distinguishes between the historical-territorial, elite culture, mass communication, and lastly, restricted systems of communication and information (1995b, p. 32-33). He uses these different *circuits* to differentiate between levels of integration into processes of international development. Thus, he suggests:

The competence of national states and of their cultural policies diminishes to the extent

³⁰Las identidades modernas eran territoriales y casi siempre monolingüísticas... las identidades posmodernas son transterritoriales y multilingüísticas... La clásica definición socio-espacial de identidad, referida a un territorio particular, necesita complementarse con una definición socio-comunicacional" (original emphases).

³¹ "La competencia de los Estados nacionales y de sus políticas culturales disminuye a medida que transitamos del primer circuito al último. A la inversa, los estudios sobre consumo cultural muestran que cuanto más jóvenes son los habitantes sus comportamientos dependen más de los dos últimos circuitos que de los dos primeros. En las nuevas generaciones las identidades se organizan menos en torno de los símbolos histórico-territoriales, los de la memoria patria, que alrededor de los de Hollywood, Televisa o Benetton".

³² "Las naciones y las Etnias siguen existiendo. Están dejando de ser para las mayorías las principales productoras de cohesión social. Pero el problema no parece ser el riesgo de que las arrase la globalización, sino entender cómo se reconstruyen las identidades étnicas, regionales y nacionales en procesos globalizados de segmentación e hibridación intercultural'.

that we move from the first circuit to the last. Contrariwise, studies of cultural consumption show that the younger the inhabitants the more their behaviour depends upon the latter two than the first two. In the new generations, identities are organised less around historico-territorial symbols, those of national memory, than around those of Hollywood, Televisa or Benetton. (1995b, p. 33)³¹

This typology may have its limitations, but it does suggest a potentially fruitful way of distinguishing the impact of the global upon various levels of any given society. At root, it is another way of underlining the point that we cannot assume that all social groups stand in identical relation to all media and that the historical horizons of different classes and generations may differ quite radically, without necessarily sharing any overall principles of coherence. The perspective could be amplified by thinking in terms of zones that are relatively more closed or open, or, again, in terms of the relative speeds of transformation of different cultural sectors and the extent to which they continue to have a hold on a *national* population.

For García Canclini, the question of collective identity is now formulated as follows:

Nations and ethnic groups continue to exist. They are ceasing to be, for the majority, the principal producers of social cohesion. But the problem does not seem to be the risk that globalisation will destroy them, rather to understand how ethnic, regional, and national identities are reconstructed in globalised processes of intercultural segmentation and hybridisation. (1995b, p. 113)³²

Is it truly the case that *the majority* no longer look to nation-states for collective identity? How could we possibly test such a proposition? While not entirely suggesting that the national state has been superseded, this approach, nevertheless, does tend to a severe downgrading of the national. García Canclini therefore sets us a double task, which is to understand both postnational formations and the same time to try and address the reshaping of national cultures (1995b, p. 109). He sees us as going through a

double movement, first of deterritorialisation (addressed by the strategies of international marketing and blockbusting world cinema) and, second, at the same a reterritorialisation based in social movements and local media. According to this argument, the national space is *relativised* and *fundamentalist* notions of identity as monocultural are rejected. The task is to find the transdisciplinary tools of analysis to move ahead. At all events media and identity need to be situated in the new relations between multimedia and multicontextuality (1995b, p. 114).

García Canclini's more recent work (1995b) draws express parallels between Europe and Latin America. He writes of both Europe and Latin America as *suburbs of Hollywood*, but with the Europeans presently more spiritedly resistant to encroachments upon their space. During the concluding phase of the GATT negotiations in late 1993, the European Union insisted upon a *cultural exception* for audio-visual products - that is, it refused to treat films and television programmes just like any other tradeable commodity on the grounds that they were part of the European cultural heritage (cf. Schlesinger, 1996).³³ García Canclini sees this European resistance to the United States over GATT as an exemplary case that raises some key questions about the relations between the national, the continental and the global (1995b, p. 127). The European insistence upon a *cultural exception* is offered as a model for Latin American producers to follow. Europe's position is perceived as a refusal to accept that globalisation necessarily means Americanisation. It is also taken to signify that there is still a place in the debate for reformulating relations between market and state as expressed through a public interest articulated by public policy. From these considerations, García Canclini argues for the need for a Latin American cultural/communicative space, the basis of which would be the recognition of Latin American multicultural reality and the control of tendencies to monopoly in media markets through public intervention both nationally and regionally. The European Union is seen as offering exemplary ways to re-

³³ Schlesinger, Philip. 1996. 'Should We Worry about America?' in Annemoon van Hemel, Hans Mommaas, and Cas Smithuisen eds. *Trading Culture: GATT, European Cultural Policies and the Transatlantic Market*. Amsterdam: Boekman Foundation: 96-110.

³⁴ Schlesinger, Philip and Doyle, Gillian. 1995. 'Contradictions of Economy and Culture: The European Union and the Information Society', *Cultural Policy* 2(1) : 25-42.

³⁵ "No se trata de restaurar el Estado propietario, sino de repensar el papel del Estado como árbitro o garante de que las necesidades colectivas de información, recreación e innovación no sean subordinadas siempre al lucro".

³⁶ cf. McLennan, Gregor. 1995. *Pluralism*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

³⁷ Ortiz, Renato. 1985. *Cultura brasileira e identidade nacional*. São Paulo: Brasiliense.
_____. 1988. *A moderna tradição brasileira: Cultura brasileira e indústria cultural*. São Paulo: Brasiliense.

_____. 1997. 'World Modernity and Identities'. *Media Development*, 54(1) : 37-40.

formulate cultural policy under new, global conditions. We might question this, given the present course of EU policy-making in which technological and industrial considerations are outweighing matters of culture and democracy (cf. Schlesinger and Doyle, 1995).³⁴ García Canclini also notes that the ground of the debate has really shifted from cinema and television to the multimedia field and that what is required is a multimedia policy that encompasses the full range of communications systems since changes in distribution systems will overtake anything more partial.

This focus opens up some direct points of comparison between Europe and Latin America and the U.S. It also underlines the connection between theorising cultural identity and formulating cultural policy. García Canclini follows in detail the supranational model of EU intervention when he argues for a Latin American common market for culture, the use of quotas to protect cultural production and for a support fund for a range of cultural activities in Latin America (1995b, p. 160-161). Taking up Roncagliolo's point, he also argues that the cultural disequilibria between Latin American countries need to be addressed, as well as measures for dealing with foreign capital (1995b, p. 162). Like it or not, the state has re-entered the argument, albeit in conditions of greater complexity. The pressing question now is how relationships between state and market can be recast: "It is not a matter of restoring state ownership, rather one of rethinking the role of the state as the arbiter or guarantor, so that the collective need for information, entertainment and innovation is not always subordinate to profitability" (1995b, p. 162).³⁵ The achievement of a new, multicultural public space is therefore located in assumptions that are both politically and sociologically pluralistic.³⁶

Beyond national identity - Renato Ortiz

Renato Ortiz's framework has been worked out in the national context of Brazil, where, he argues, national identity has always been a political question.³⁷ Within the national space there will

³⁸ "Na verdade, a luta pela definição do que seria uma identidade autêntica é uma forma de se limitar as fronteiras de uma política que procura se impor como legítima". This is very close to the point of view developed in Schlesinger, 1997. 'National Identity: Some Conceptions and Misconceptions Criticized', *Social Science Information* 26(2) : 219-264.

³⁹ "a relação entre nacional e popular se manifesta no interior de um quadro mais amplo, o Estado".

⁴⁰ "A memória colectiva é a da ordem da vivência, a memória nacional se refere a uma história que transcende os sujeitos e não se concretiza imediatamente no seu cotidiano."

always be contending, interest-based, constructions of what constitutes the national, with the question of legitimacy of power at stake: "In truth, the struggle for the definition of an authentic identity is a way of staying within the boundaries of a politics that seeks to impose itself as legitimate" (1985, p. 9).³⁸

Reviewing the history of attempts to define Brazilianness, Ortiz takes his distance from a tradition of essentialist efforts to distill the Brazilian character, and notes Marxism's problem with analysing nationalism. However, of all Marxist theorists, he sees Gramsci's attempt to theorise the national-popular as offering the most fruitful road, not least because for the Italian theorist the problem was thought through, analogously, in respect of the difficulties of state construction in his own country. Above all else, argues Ortiz, the national question is part of the problem of the state: "the relation between national and popular manifests itself inside a broader framework, the state" (1985, p. 130).³⁹

Taking the state as the necessary frame of reference leads him to a key distinction: that between collective memory and national memory. He describes this as follows:

Collective memory is of the lived reality, national memory relates to a history that transcends subjects and does not immediately take shape in its everydayness. (1985, p.135)⁴⁰

Broadly speaking, then, there is a homologous relation between the immediate, lived concreteness of the popular and collective memory, just as there is a similar relation between the more distanced, ideological, official realm of the state and national memory. The general force of this conception is that the national is a kind of second-order construction with respect to the popular. One can see in this more than a passing resemblance to the well-worn Italian distinction between *paese reale* and *paese legale*, where the state is perceived as remote and illegitimate and the most secure personal and collective moorings are to be found in civil society. National identity, in this kind of political order is, then, an attribute of the state, which actually constitutes it:

⁴¹ "O Estado é esta totalidade que transcende e integra os elementos concretos da realidade social, ele delimita o quadro de construção da identidade nacional. É através de uma relação política que se constitui assim a identidade..."

⁴² "o processo de construção de identidade nacional se fundamenta sempre numa interpretação."

⁴³ "se transforma em ideologia que justifica a ação dos grupos empresariais no mercado mundial. Talvez por isso não há grandes diferenças entre o discurso de venda da telenovela e a argumentação dos comerciantes de armamentos no exterior... uma vez que ambos são vistos exclusivamente como produtos nacionais".

The state is that totality that transcends and integrates the concrete elements of social reality, it delimits the framework of construction of national identity. It is by means of a political relation that identity is constituted. (1985, p. 138-9)⁴¹

Thus, there is a political interest in gaining assent to a given version of national identity, and the active marketing of this requires mediation -and here again, the well-known Gramscian conception of the role of intellectuals as intermediaries for given classes comes into play since "the process of national identity-construction is always based on an interpretation" (1985, p. 139).⁴² The national state takes up and universalises the folkloric and the popular, in this conception. The *nationalisation* of media production has its uses when, in the hands of major companies it "is transformed into an ideology that justifies the action of enterprises in the world market. Maybe this is why there are no big differences between the discourse of selling telenovelas and the arguments of those selling arms abroad...once both are seen exclusively as national products" (Ortiz 1988, p. 206).⁴³

Several points are worthy of note. First is Ortiz's anti-essentialism, so characteristic of the new culturalism. Second is the initial strong stratification between the domains of the national and the popular (aka the collective). This hard-edged classification and homologisation has had to soften in the face of postmodern concerns. And third, there is the rather questionable limiting of the term collective identity to the folkloric/popular level. We would argue that *collective* identity is more properly applied to a higher level of generality, and in principle could embrace any collectivity.

In his more recent work, Ortiz (1997) addresses the impact of what he terms - following Braudel's formulation - *world-modernity* upon collective identities. At the core of his argument is the proposition that the classic principles of integration, territoriality and centrality that have been held to characterise the nation -and to offer the bases for national identity - have in significant measure been

displaced by processes of globalisation.

Ortiz begins by tracing the intellectual roots of theories of national identity based in anthropology, sociology and political philosophy. In cultural anthropology's conceptions of *character* (as found in the work of Benedict and Kroeber, for instance), the modal psychology of tribal societies was transformed wholesale into a conception of *national character*. Implicit in this was an essentialist notion of the nation as a singular personality.

A way out of this ontological notion, Ortiz suggests, may be found in Lévi-Strauss's suggestion that *identity* is not an essence but rather something *virtual*, a conceptual move that makes us think in terms of produced relations. Ortiz (1997, p. 38) offers a definition of identity in the light of this as: "a symbolic construction that is made in relation to a referent". These referents may be various - a culture, a nation, an *ethnie*, a skin colour, gender. This shift towards thinking of identity as a symbolic construction rather than a thing already there to be described, he argues, disposes of the question of whether an identity is authentic or inauthentic. This is continuous with his earlier argument. However, he has moved away from the broadly binary model of the collectivities to which identity might be assigned.

Turning to Mauss's conception of the nation - a nineteenth century conception of the staid people with a distinctive territory and material base in a world economy - Ortiz rightly notes that this tends to anticipate the formation of the nation-state, which, employing Otto Bauer's formulation, has now become a *community of destiny*. Ortiz endorses Gellner's view that the nation is a product of modernity, in particular of industrial development. In this regard, the experience of belonging becomes delocalised as it becomes nationalised (not least through forms of communication, from the railway to the telegraph to the media). However, the nation is not an undifferentiated essence but rather a contradictory formation, and somewhat precarious at that. According to Ortiz (1997, p. 39), the classic nation-state is "not only a politico-administrative entity, it is a locus

for the production of meaning". So, at this stage of development we could - using a Weberian trope, as he does- argue that the nation-state has a monopoly over the definition of meaning. This too is a reprise of his earlier position. However, he now argues (following Giddens), that we need to look beyond the nation-state form and note the impact of the *dis-embedding* process, the dislocation of space and of time which is an aspect of modernity itself. The contradictions induced by globalisation mean that national identity loses its monopoly of sense-making.

This shift leads into the proposal that we now think in terms of *world-modernity*. Contrary to some advocates of postmodernism, Ortiz (1997,p.39) is careful to note that he is not talking about either a global culture or identity but rather of how "the movement of deterritorialisation outside national frontiers accelerates conditions of mobility and *disembeds*".⁴⁴ Examples he cites of this process are the shared youth culture that transcends national boundaries and the diffusion of middle-class consumption patterns and tastes. He also makes reference to the way in which Afro-Brazilian-Caribbean music has surmounted the boundaries of the national state and to the rise of linguistic and regional struggles in Latin America in which subaltern groupings have made new identity-claims. The three principles of integration, territoriality and centrality can no longer reproduce themselves.

In attempting to delineate what this shift - this *decentring*, to use Martín-Barbero's term- means, Ortiz takes up de Certeau's distinction between strategy and tactics. Strategies operate in definite locations, whereas tactics work at the margins, and are basically liminal activities. This uncertainty, it is argued, is what now characterises identities: in García Canclini's term they become *negotiated*.

Once again, while recognising the important impact of change, Ortiz still insists that there is a hierarchy of relations. Diversity, he argues, does not equate to democracy: world-modernity makes multiple referents available to social groups, which use them in different ways. The widespread international

⁴⁴ "o movimento de desterritorialização para fora das fronteiras nacionais acelera as condições de mobilidade e *desencaixe*."

availability, use, and adaptability of a shared set of symbols for identity construction, however, should not be automatically interpreted as a democratising force.

To represent the sociological panorama in political terms is deceptive. Global society, far from stimulating the equality of identities, is cut across by a clear and merciless hierarchy. Identities are different, and unequal, because their inventors, the forces that construct them, occupy different positions of power and legitimacy. (1997, p. 40)⁴⁵

Here, there is an obvious divergence from the most recent argument of García Canclini, where a pluralistic sociology and politics tend to converge.

A perspective from Europe

In recent years, as we have shown, there has been a shift of thinking in one strand of Latin American cultural theory beyond the boundaries set by dependency approaches. This has entailed setting aside the problem of the hegemonic domination of popular culture by the United States and at the same time making an attempt to reinterpret the role of culture and its relation to collective identities. Central to the line of analysis represented by the work reviewed here is the perceptible disarticulation between popular culture and the national state, and an increasing recognition of the impact of new media technologies upon collectivities. Migration and the creation of electronic communities are seen as crucial in transcending long-established boundaries and in relativising borders. In fact, borders, from this perspective, are no longer seen as enclosures fully and effectively policed by states. Rather, they are themselves in motion. Therein lies the central impact of the postmodern perspective: the world has been rendered liminal.

However, alongside new, extended mediatic spaces, older frameworks of collective identity continue to exist - perhaps coexist would be a better way of phrasing it- and it is the dislocations between these diverse modes of collective being, older and newer, that are perceived as bringing about new

⁴⁵ "Traduzir o panorama sociológico em termos políticos é enganoso. A sociedade global, longe de incentivar a igualdade das identidades, é sulcada por uma hierarquia, clara, e impiedosa. As identidades são diferentes, e desiguais, porque seus artifices, as instâncias que as constroem, desfrutam distintas posições de poder e de legitimidade."

problems of socio-cultural coherence, as well as ushering in new opportunities for affiliation. One broad conclusion to be drawn, then, is that in important respects the spaces of at least some collective identities are becoming *deterritorialised*. This points towards what has been termed a *postnational* order -which should be more accurately, if more cumbrously be termed a *post-national-state* order- in which questions are being posed about the extent to which the framework of the national state offers an overarching framework of legitimacy, loyalty and sense-making. According to proponents of this view, such as Susan Strange (1995, p. 56) the state is becoming a *hollowed-out* or defective institution and "state authority has leaked away, upwards, sideways and downwards...The realm of anarchy in society and economy has become more extensive as that of all kinds of authority has diminished".⁴⁶ It follows, then, that in a reshaping global economy, culture, nation and state are no longer (if they ever were) aligned according to the classic tenets of nationalism.

⁴⁶ Strange, Susan. 1995. 'The Defective State'. *Daedalus* 124 (2) : 55-74.

One reaction to this is to throw up one's hands and declare an end to the role of the state in the management of culture. In Latin America, this response can be seen in the initial loss of attraction of the national communication policy as an instrument both of cultural defence and of the promotion of social integration. The emphasis on the syncretic vitality of the popular in some respects has seemed to make the role of the state redundant. But there are sufficient signs now that the role of the state -whether conceived of as a national or even continental political instance - cannot be dispensed with so easily. As Craig Calhoun (1993, p. 390) has observed, "[t]he definition of boundaries and constitution of a collective identity are crucial components of the constitution of a political community in the modern world system of states".⁴⁷ The existence of globalizing tendencies in the economy and systems of communication has not decisively displaced the state from its role as an instance of political direction and identification however much we might be witnessing a modification of its powers. Indeed, in support

⁴⁷ Calhoun, Craig. 1993. 'Nationalism and Civil Society: Democracy, Diversity and Self-Determination', *International Sociology* 8(4) : 387-411.

⁴⁸ Mann, Michael. 1993. 'Nation-States in Europe and Other Continents: Diversifying, Developing, not Dying', *Daedalus* 112(3) : 115-140.

of this view Michael Mann (1993, p.118) maintains that one might well argue that the nation-state is still maturing and that "[n]ational education systems, mass media and consumer markets are still subverting localism an homogenising social and cultural life into units which are at their smallest extent, national".⁴⁸

In fact, we would suggest, the recognition of postnational displacements of identity has increasingly promoted the need to acknowledge the continuing (if modified) significance of the national state. And as frustration over the capacity of the market-place to deliver cultural quality has grown, it is also apparent that the role of public policy remains part of the picture. This is surely inescapably the case, for as Marjorie Ferguson (1995, p. 440) has recently remarked, "while the globalist market rhetoric espouses cultural universalism, the local political reality is economic nationalism".⁴⁹ And economic nationalism requires a political instrument, which, in the cultural domain means according some institutional weight to forms of regulation.

⁴⁹ Ferguson, Marjorie. 1995. 'Media, Markets and Identities: Reflections on the Global-Local Dialectic'. *Canadian Journal of Communication* 20(4) : 439-459.

Although many of the points made in Latin American cultural analysis resonate across the Atlantic, in Europe their framing is differently conditioned by the economic, political and cultural shaping of the intellectual field. In these concluding reflections we wish to consider some relevant parallels and divergences.

For instance, the EU's attempts to define a *European* cultural identity have taken place in the context of global industrial competition, most especially with the United States. It has been fascinating to observe the deployment of a discourse of dependency (echoing Latin American debates) by those intent on protecting European audiovisual production from the depredations of the U.S., a strategy vigorously pursued during the concluding phase of the GATT negotiations in 1993.⁵⁰ In Europe, as in Latin America, policy-makers are probing the relationship between recent developments in the globalisation of communication and what that now implies for communication sovereignty.

⁵⁰ This has also drawn upon long-standing elite concerns about the negative impact of *Americanisation*. For a discussion, see Schlesinger 1996.

⁵¹ Acheson, Keith and Maule, Christopher, J. 1994 'International Regimes for Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility in the Cultural Industries'. *Canadian Journal of Communication* 19(3/4) : 147-167.

There is certainly a parallel to be explored between the distinctive concerns for the protection of collective identities aroused by trade liberalisation on both sides of the Atlantic. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a regime regulating goods and services, contains specific reference to cultural industries. As in the EU during the GATT negotiations, the cultural impact of economic relations with the USA was (and remains) a matter of concern both in Canada and Mexico, with specific exemptions sought to protect given sectors of cultural production. In each country, national identity consequences, as well as industrial considerations, were a motive force (Acheson and Maule 1994, p. 156-158).⁵¹

Facing outwards, the EU may be regarded as a single cultural actor on the world scene, at least, in recent years, for the purposes of trade negotiations. Conversely, looked at from within, the EU also offers an outstanding example of the tensions that have increasingly come to the fore between supranationalism and nationalism in the domain of culture, and in this respect it marks a major difference from Latin America, which may more readily be seen as a cultural area. From the above discussion, it is apparent that the debate over culture, media and identity in Latin America works from a sense of a shared space, where historically-charged linguistic and socio-cultural difference does not play anywhere near so marked a role as on this side of the Atlantic. That is not to say, however, that specific national conditions are unimportant in shaping the kinds of analysis offered.⁵²

⁵² This point was emphasised to us in a private discussion with Néstor García Canclini and Renato Ortiz.

In Europe, the EU has to square the circle of providing some kind of common cultural space for historically diverse states, for whom internal linguistic hegemonisation (if not complete homogenisation) has been central to nation-building. The national pride that takes language as a crucial symbol of identity is a knotty point at which any supranational Euro-goals rub up hard against the national level. Additionally, the latterday EU-endorsed recognition of regional differences within member states -the *Europe of the Regions*- has reinforced au-

⁵³ Schlesinger, Philip. 1992. 'Europeanness - A New Cultural Battlefield?', *Innovation in Social Sciences Research* 5(2) : 11-23.

⁵⁴ These issues also exist at some level in Latin America, notably with indigenous groups, although they have been little addressed in the works examined here.

⁵⁵ This has been discussed and criticised in Schlesinger and Doyle 1995 and Schlesinger 1996.

conomist and in some cases secessionist tendencies, particularly where these coincide with the territory of an existing stateless nation. The field of culture broadly understood, at least in some contexts, has thus understandably become a battlefield (Schlesinger 1992).⁵³

The EU's evolution, which is premised upon the political and economic integration of a group of national states, has therefore raised two sets of interlocked questions about forms of cultural diversity: there is the presently contradictory relationship of state-endorsed national culture with the demands of *Europeanisation*, and then there is the question of cultures that are neither fully annexed to, nor easily encompassed by, national-state culture. The cultural rights of ethnic and linguistic minorities and the claims for cultural recognition of nations without states are key cases in point.⁵⁴

In the face of Europe's great socio-cultural diversity, it is not surprising that EU policy has addressed the uses and effectiveness of media and cultural policy to secure collective identity, which, as we have seen, has also been a concern in Latin America. It is important to register the fact that EU policy developments over the past decade are more ambiguous than they might, at first blush, appear. They certainly do not provide a model which can be exported ready-made across the Atlantic for use in different conditions, however seductive this may seem. The rhetoric of cultural construction - best exemplified by the desire to produce a European audiovisual space- has given way to something else. With the ascendance of market liberalising tendencies and the renewed hype in the 1990s around the *information society*, there has been an increasing policy emphasis - both technicist and economicist - on creating a *European information area*.⁵⁵ Thus, the EU's approach to culture is a contested field, and it is unclear which tendencies shall prevail. Consequently, as Enrique Bustamante (1997, p. 44) justly observes, there are dangers of serious distortion if Latin American researchers intent on offering an alternative to the deregulated market-place simply

⁵⁶ Bustamante, Enrique. 1997. 'Limits in Latin American Communication Studies'. *Media Development* 54(1) : 41-44.

"present the European model as a goal while leaving its governments - the sponsors of myths about the information society- out of the picture".⁵⁶

In the line of Latin American cultural analysis explored earlier, the state is in soft focus because its very circumvention is at the heart of the exploration and recent experience of repression has led many intellectuals to be very chary of the state's role in cultural affairs. Looked at from a European point of view, however, it would be appropriate to insist upon the continuing relevance of the national state as both an analytical category and as a crucial political actor.

This is no more than to recognise that in Europe - as in Latin America - for the past two centuries statehood and nationhood have been coupled together in a dominant model of the polity -albeit with diverse success. Although the European routes taken to *nation-statehood* have been various, and are the subject of much scholarly debate, it is evident that this political form remains compelling. Plainly, despite all the present-day talk of post-nationalism, the post-Cold War shake-out in Europe has conformed to the historical modal type: following one well-trodden path, numerous nations in the post-communist world have sought states to give themselves a *political roof*, in the pregnant phrase coined by the late Ernest Gellner (1983).⁵⁷

In Europe, we have scarcely needed to be reminded of the continuing potency of nationhood as a mode of collective self-expression in the wake of the break-up of the former Soviet Union, the bloody collapse of former Yugoslavia, or the so-called *velvet divorce* in Czechoslovakia. In each of these cases, a supranational federation has decanted into nation-states, alas not without significant - and continuing - violent conflict in some instances. German reunification, moreover, once again has fundamentally reshaped the European map. A crucial point, therefore, is that European national political space is integrally related through the state to conceptions of national cultural space. Political communication continues, pre-eminently, to be a process that occurs

⁵⁷ Gellner, Ernest. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell.

within the borders of the national state, despite the increasing presence of a supranational framework.

In some recent Latin American analysis there has been a tendency to be enchanted by the seeming success of the EU in resolving its cultural contradictions. However, for those closer to the action in Europe, and familiar with the uneven and sometimes contradictory paths taken in European integration, proximity may lend disenchantment to the prospect. If there is any chance of shaping a new, postnational collective identity and legitimacy in the EU, it may be by way of the construction of a common political culture that offers scope for identification by diverse nations and ethnic groups. In other words, in Europe, as in Latin America, there is a case for displacing the prevalent concern with cultural defence into the pursuit of positive democratic institution-building.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to express their gratitude to the World Association for Christian Communication, and in particular to the imaginative proposal by Philip Lee that made possible the colloquium for which the research for this paper was undertaken. WACC's benign intervention has stimulated us, finally, to put our long-standing private discussions of recent Latin American cultural theory on paper. We also wish to acknowledge the support of the Norwegian Research Council's ARENA Programme (Advanced Research on the Europeanisation of the Nation-State) in which Philip Schlesinger has participated. Finally, our heartfelt thanks to Doug Vick for his keen editorial skills. This paper revises an earlier version originally published as Cultural Boundaries: Identity and Communication in Latin America in *Media Development* 54(1) 1997, p. 5-17, which was named top-ranked paper in International Communication by the Intercultural and Development Communication Division at the International Communication Association Annual Conference, 1997. All translations are by the authors.